CHURCH HISTORY

Chapter 48 – The Church Seeks to Preserve the Faith

1. Fundamentalism

a.In the year 1910 a series of twelve small volumes was published under the title, The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth. The appearance of these books marked the beginning of the Fundamentalist movement, an organized attempt to uphold the teachings of the Bible against Modernism

b.The doctrines set forth in these books as fundamental were: (1) the Bible's freedom from error in every respect, (2) the virgin birth of Christ, (3) the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross (that He suffered and died in our stead to satisfy the wrath of God against sin), (4) the physical resurrection, and (5) the physical second coming of Christ

c.More than 2,500,000 copies of these books were circulated, and in all the large churches a sharp controversy developed between the Fundamentalists and the Modernists. It stirred the Methodist, the Episcopalian, and the Disciples churches, but it raged most violently in the Baptist and Presbyterian churches. The struggle began in 1916 and continues to the present day

2.Many Fundamentalists Accept Premillennialism

a.The horrors of the First World War led many people to believe that the end of the world was at hand. Believing this, they occupied themselves with the teaching of the Bible concerning the last things. A vast number of people in the various churches accepted the doctrine that the Jews will return to Palestine, and that Christ will come back to earth to rule in Jerusalem as king for a thousand years. This doctrine is called Premillennialism, because it teaches that the second coming of Christ will take place before (pre) the establishment upon earth of a reign of a thousand years (millennial). The people who hold to this doctrine are called Premillennialists or, more commonly, Premillenarians.

b.A great number of the Fundamentalists in the large churches accepted the Premillennial views. Thus, although the name Fundamentalist would be a fitting one for all those who believe the fundamental truths of the Bible, it has in past years become popularly linked with the Premillenarians. This doctrine of the thousand-year reign is also held by a number of the small sects and the so-called undenominational churches.

3.Holiness Groups Oppose Worldliness

a.with the triumphant progress of Modernism in the fashionable churches and their formalistic worship, these people felt that heart religion was disappearing. Around the year 1880 the "holiness" question came to the fore especially in the Methodist churches. In his day Wesley had taught the possibility of Christian perfection. But to the great mass of members in the Methodist churches, Christian perfection was no longer a goal for which to strive with might and main. Instead a large measure of worldliness had crept in

*b.Between the years 1880 and 1926 no less than twenty-five Holiness and Pentecostal sects were formed; The Church **of** the Nazarene was formed in 1894 when eight smaller Holiness groups combined. Other Holiness groups are the Assemblies of God, the Church of God, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ. All are protests against the increasing Modernism in the large churches of America*

4.Established Churches Oppose Liberalism

a.Other churches, both old and new, have taken their stand for the true, historical Christian faith; although Modernism has swept in like a tide during the past few decades, there have been and still are those in many denominations who by God's grace are standing firm and will not be moved

5.The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

a.in 1929, under the heroic leadership of Professor J. Gresham Machen, the Westminster Seminary was established in Philadelphia as a protest against the Modernism at Princeton. After a severe struggle, the defenders of the Calvinistic doctrines of the Westminster Confession suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of the Modernists in the General Assembly of 1935. This victory of the Modernists was made possible by the large number of Presbyterian ministers who, although themselves sound in doctrine, played into the hands of the Modernists when they valued peace above truth. Those who were true to the faith of their fathers then organized, in 1936, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. This small but valiant church continues today its bold fight against Modernism

6.The Christian Reformed Church

a.In doctrine this denomination is Reformed or Calvinistic. Its creeds are the creeds of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. The form of its government is Presbyterian

b.There are several factors that aid in maintaining the orthodoxy of the denomination. One of the two sermons that ministers are required to preach each Sunday must follow the Heidelberg Catechism. Families are visited every year by the pastors and elders. Catechism instruction for the youth of the church is emphasized. Christian day schools are given strong support. Societies for all age groups promote Bible study. And in a day of growing laxity in most denominations, members are disciplined even to the point of excommunication for failure to show evidence of a true faith or failure to live the Christian life.